David Walley research material about Ernie Kovacs, ca. 1972-1975

Processed by Chris Marino in the Center for Primary Research and Training (CFPRT), with assistance from Megan Hahn Fraser, August 2011; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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Descriptive Summary

Title: David Walley research material about Ernie Kovacs

Date (inclusive): ca. 1972-1975

Collection number: 2107

Creator: David Walley

Extent: 1 boxes (0.5 linear ft.)

Abstract: Research material collected by David Walley during the early 1970s for the writing of his biography on Ernie Kovacs.

Language: Finding aid is written in English.

Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections.

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

Restrictions on Access

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Provenance/Source of Acquisition


Processing Note

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], David Walley research material about Ernie Kovacs (Collection 2107). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

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Biography

David G. Walley was born March 18, 1945 in Plainfield, New Jersey, son of Miron Monroe (a lawyer) and Sylvia Silot Walley. In 1967 Walley graduated with a BA from Rutgers University and continued his education at Hofstra University from 1967 to 1968. He worked as a columnist for Jazz and Pop magazine and the East Village Other, and wrote music reviews in Zygote, Fusion, and Changes. He was later Arts Editor of the L.A. Free Press. His books include: No Commercial Potential: The Saga of Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention (1972), Nothing in Moderation: a Biography of Ernie Kovacs (1975), and Teenage Nervous Breakdown: Music Politics in the Post-Elvis Age (c. 1998). Throughout his career he worked as a music critic, book and arts reviewer, editor, lecturer, and media consultant. Walley died in 2006 at the age of 61. At the time he was in the process of finishing a biography of the historian Herbert Feis entitled The Shackled Historian: The Life and Times of Herbert Feis.

Ernie Kovacs was born Ernest Edward Kovacs on January 23, 1919 in Trenton, New Jersey. After graduating acting school at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Kovacs found work as a disc jockey on Trenton's WTTM radio and as a columnist for Trenton's local weekly newspaper The Trentonian. It was in Trenton where Kovacs developed his ad-libbed comedic style. Kovacs found success as a character actor in films such as: Operation Mad Ball, Wake Me When It's Over, Our Man in Havana, Bell Book and Candle, It Happened to Jane, Five Golden Hours, and Sail a Crooked Ship. He also did several TV specials: Silent Show and the Ernie Kovacs Special. Kovacs died in an automobile accident in Southern California when he lost control of his vehicle and crashed into a power pole on January 13, 1962. Kovacs was only 43 years old.

Scope and Content

Collection consists of research material assembled by Walley for his book about Ernie Kovacs called Nothing in Moderation: a biography of Ernie Kovacs (1976). Collected by Walley in the early 1970s, some of the material actually dates from the 1950s and 1960s. Research materials include newspaper clippings (majority are photocopies of the original newspaper),
transcribed interviews Walley conducted with Kovacs friends and co-workers, correspondence, annotated production
memos, literature on Kovacs, publicity photographs and stills of movies that Kovacs was in, and Walley's annotated draft of
the biography.

**Indexing Terms**
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**
- Walley, David --Archives.
- Kovacs, Ernie, 1919-1962.
- Authors, American --Archival resources.
- Comedians --United States.
- Television actors and actresses --United States.
- Motion picture actors and actresses --United States.

**Genres and Forms of Material**
- manuscripts for publication.
- photographs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1</th>
<th>Draft of Nothing in Moderation: The Life and Times of Ernie Kovacs, 1974.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 1</td>
<td>Miscellaneous notes on Ernie Kovacs by Walley, 1967.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 2</td>
<td>Publicity stills and photographs, ca. 1957-1960.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scope and Content Note**
Includes negatives and publicity photographs of James Stewart, Kim Novak and Ernie Kovacs for the movie *Bell, Book and Candle*. Publicity photographs of Ernie Kovacs, Jack Lemmon, and Doris Day for the film *It Happened to Jane*. Publicity photographs of Kirk Douglas, Kim Novak and Ernie Kovacs for the film *Strangers When We Meet*. Publicity photographs from the movies *Our Man in Havana* and *Operation Mad Ball*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 3</th>
<th>Kovacs in NYC: CBS and NBC shows, interviews and friends, 1951-1956.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Scope and Content Note**
A collection of transcribed interviews about Kovacs. Interviewees include Kovacs' co-workers and friends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 4</th>
<th>McKay and Behar, Philadelphia interviews, undated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Scope and Content Note**
A transcribed interview of Andy McKay who was an early associate of Kovacs in Philadelphia and New York. Also includes a transcribed interview of Joe Behar, a director who worked with Ernie Kovacs primarily in Philadelphia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 5</th>
<th>Correspondence of David Walley regarding the Ernie Kovacs book, 1973.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Scope and Content Note**
Primarily letters written by Walley to Kovacs friends and co-workers regarding the biography on Kovacs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 6</th>
<th>Letters of Ernie Kovacs to Ken McCormick plus interview re: Zooman and other projects, undated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Scope and Content Note**
Includes photocopies of letters between Kovacs and McCormick (who worked for Doubleday) that were given to Walley during the time he was researching Kovacs for his book. Also includes transcribed interviews Walley conducted with McCormick.
| Box 1, Folder 7 | **Ernie Kovacs in Trenton, N.J., 1946-1971.**  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Photocopies of Kovacs' column called "Kovacs Unlimited" from the newspaper *The Trentonian*. Includes transcribed interviews Walley conducted with Kovacs' friends and co-workers who worked with Kovacs in Trenton, New Jersey. Also includes photocopies of press clippings regarding Kovacs' custody fight and divorce proceedings with his first wife Bette Wilcox. |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | **Kovacs in Hollywood: Interviews, undated.**  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Interviews Walley conducted with Kovacs' co-workers, family and friends in Hollywood. |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | **Annotated production memos re: specials for ABC, ca. 1961.** |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | **Newspaper articles on Ernie Kovacs, 1950-1962.**  
**Physical Description:** Primarily photocopies. |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | **Portion of Mary Lou Cassidy's master's thesis on Ernie Kovacs with letters from Andrew C. McKay, ca.1970.** |